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ABSTRACT

This guide for teachers explores the dynamics of successful parent involvement with their children's education. The guide is centered on 10 keys to family involvement: (1) creating a new definition of parent that includes alternative caregivers; (2) moving toward "family involvement" rather than just parent involvement; (3) devising new definitions of involvement to include ways to serve families as well as requesting services from families; (4) creating opportunities for meaningful involvement such as tutoring; (5) considering convenience for parents when scheduling conferences and events; (6) respecting the parent as the child's first and most powerful teacher; (7) maintaining a relationship with both the child and the parent; (8) keeping the school program relevant to the parent's goals and concerns for the child; (9) improving communication skills, including awareness of parents' native languages; and (10) providing empowerment for parents that will encourage their participation. After listing these 10 keys, the guide presents short articles exploring issues related to parent involvement and conferences: why some parents fear the schools, why some teachers fear parent involvement, and how teaching is an increasingly difficult occupation. The next section of articles discusses the parent conference as a major component of a parent involvement program, including elements of a successful conference, principles for creating an inviting conference, skills for understanding and effective questioning, and some conference pitfalls to avoid. The remaining section provides 70 practical strategies for family involvement including: (1) parent reading programs; (2) a parent course on helping students with homework; (3) a home class newsletter; (4) parent signatures on homework; (5) parents as tutors and aids; (6) translation services; (7) a television "turn-off"; (8) advance announcements of meetings and events; and (9) parent-teacher exchange day. An appendix lists possible topics for a parent course. (HTH)